

## RUFFS AND CUFFS



**T**HE weekly wash nowadays is not nearly so complicated a business as it was when men as well as women wore ruffs and cuffs, frills and flounces. Today the housewife has simpler clothes to tackle, but both the work of home laundering and the results she is able to achieve are helped by the skill of the research chemist and the products of the British chemical industry. Soap is, of course, her first requisite. If asked how soap does its work the technical man might reply "Soap has the property of detaching soiling matter from textile fabrics and maintaining it in suspension in the washing liquor thus permitting its removal without redispersion on the fabric". In other words, soap loosens the dirt from clothes or curtains and enables them to be washed clean. To discover precisely how it does this, and consequently to make better and more efficient soaps, have meant a great deal of patient and complex research. Soap cannot work unless it lathers, and it will not lather easily in hard water. The harder the water the more soap will be used, so that in these days when strict economy is necessary, the careful housewife will add washing soda — crystallised sodium carbonate — to soften the water and save soap. In addition to the service he gives to the great soap-making industry, the chemist has provided a number of other aids to domestic washing — ultramarine or "blue", and chemicals such as hypochlorites, borates, perborates, percarbonates, silicates and various forms of phosphates. For the laundries, of course, there is a further range of chemical products. These may not be suitable for home use, but play a valuable part in helping the laundries to give efficient service in difficult conditions. Starch is today required for food, for making surgical spirit and other uses of national importance. When Peace brings back the starch to our collars, it may be expected also to bring new and improved chemical aids alike for the laundry and the weekly wash.



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